

Literary Translation 5

2 Difference of effect

The difference between simile and metaphor - that the former is an explicit comparison while the latter implicit - results in a difference of effect. A comparison established through simile keeps us almost equally aware of the two things involved.

In a metaphor, however, the fusion of the two elements is such that we remain far more aware of one of them than the other. This characteristic of metaphor can best be illustrated by the following lines from Auden 's poem 'As I Walked Out One Evening' (quoted in Kreuzer 1955: 88):

In headaches and in worry
Vaguely life leaks away,
And Time will have his fancy
To-morrow or to-day.

في صداع وقلق
تتسرب الأيام بغموض،
وسوف يأتيك الزمن بوهمه
غدا أو من يومك

In these lines attention is centered on life; it is not equally shared with a leaky vessel. Yet we have some awareness of the leaky vessel. Actually, the metaphor results in our seeing of life with the characteristics of a leaky vessel made intrinsic to it.

3 Economy and immediacy

Another main distinction between metaphor and simile is that the former is more economical and immediate than the latter (see Gill 1985: 19-20). It is possible through metaphor to make a complex statement without complicating the grammatical construction of the sentence that carries the statement. Consider, for example, the metaphor in the following Qur'anic verse:

"قال ربي اني وهن العظم مني واشتعل الراس شيبا"

"He said: My Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, and my head is blazing with grey hair".

If expressed through, a simile, the metaphorical expression "my head is blazing with grey hair" would be something like "The spread of grey hair in my head is like the spread of fire in dry stalks", or "Grey hair is to my head as a blazing fire to firewood", which is quite untypical of the style of the Qur'an which is characterized by succinctness and forcefulness. This perhaps is one main reason why the metaphor under discussion is retained in almost all translation versions of the verse in question (see *The Noble Qur'an: Translations of the Qur'an: Chapter 19, Verse 4*, www). The only translation I have come across where it is rendered via a different procedure is that given by Al-Hilaali and Khan (1996: 384) where it is converted to sense: "... and grey hair has spread on my head", but which demonstrates clearly the noticeable translation loss this conversion has entailed in terms of the conciseness, vividness, and suggestiveness of the expression.

4 Degree of explicitness

A further feature distinguishing metaphoric utterances from similes is that it is part of the nature of the former to be ambiguous, particularly when taken in isolation. The ambiguity in such cases arises from the uncertainty about which words are to be understood metaphorically, and which literally. Kittay (1987: 25) uses an interesting example to illustrate this point. The sentence 'This man is my mother' may be understood in two different ways:

- (1) The man has treated me as I might expect a mother to treat me ('man', in this case, is used literally, and 'mother', figuratively).
- (2) I am remarking on the presumed masculine characteristics of a woman who is actually my mother (in which case 'mother' has a literal meaning while 'man', a figurative one).

Turning such a metaphor into a simile (e.g., "That-man is as kind to me as my mother") would allow of only one interpretation, thus rendering the sentence unambiguous. The ambiguity of the original utterance, however, may be, or usually is, intended to achieve a certain stylistic purpose, e.g., highlighting the characteristic of kindheartedness attributed to the man in question (in the case of the first interpretation), or providing a maximally vivid description of the masculine qualities of the mother (in the case of the second interpretation). This, of course, is similarly the case in translation.

5. Justifiable Changes

It was suggested above that for one reason or another it is sometimes not possible for a SL metaphor to be retained in the TL, the implication being that, in such cases, the translator may justifiably resort to one of the alternative solutions or translation procedures mentioned in the introduction. The following two cases will suffice to illustrate this point.

a. Lack of semantic equivalence

There are cases where the translator finds it inevitable to translate a metaphor into a non-metaphor due to the fact that a given SL referent may have a certain connotation that is lacking in the seemingly corresponding referent in the TL. Consider, for example, the use of the word <:-It.... in the following line of verse (Al-Hamadaanii, n.d. : 66) :

ولا شد لي سرج على ظهر ساجٍ و لا ضُربت بالعراء قبابُ

The basic meaning of Arabic (ساجٍ) is exactly the same as that of 'swimmer' in English. Metaphorically, however, the former, but not the latter, is also used as an epithet for horses, meaning 'floating', to indicate their high speed; there is, thus, (سواج) 'race horses' (Wehr 1961). It is because of this difference in meaning, it seems, that Arberry (1965: 94) uses a literal, non-metaphorical, alternative (viz., 'galloper') in his translation of the above-quoted line:

No saddle is bound for me on the back of a strong galloper,
Neither is any tent pitched for me in the desert.

b. The general purpose of translation

The question of whether or not a source text (ST) image should be retained in a target text (TT) is sometimes a matter of attitude on the part of the translator towards the general purpose of translation (particularly of literary texts). Translation theorists distinguish between two main types of translation, the so-called 'semantic translation' and 'communicative translation', a distinction similarly reflected, consciously or unconsciously, in translators' products. A semantically oriented translation has as its main objective the rendering of the

exact contextual meaning of the ST *as closely as possible*; loyalty to the SL culture thus remains to be a major strategic objective of the semantic translator. 'Communicative translation', on the other hand, is primarily oriented towards the TL reader "who does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities, and would expect a general transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary" (Newmark 1982: 39). For the purposes of illustration, consider the image Shakespeare uses in following lines of his sonnet 18:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

In these lines, Shakespeare is wondering whether he would do his friend justice by likening him to 'a summer's day'. The summer referred to here, of course, is not the type of summer familiar to people in some other parts of the world. In the Middle East, for instance, it is an annoyingly hot season and extends over a long period of time, unlike the case in Britain, where it is characteristically pleasant and much shorter. The transfer of the SL image in this case may thus pose a translation problem if the TL is a Middle Eastern one, Arabic for example: the comparison would sound unsuitable to the Arab reader / hearer. To get around this problem, a communicative English-Arabic translator may thus find it appropriate to replace the SL image 'a summer's day' by an equivalent TL one, (الربيع) 'spring', thereby avoiding an inevitable cultural shock, as in the following example (Ali 2002: 130):

أقول أشبهت الربيع طباعا
وطباعك الأحنى وحسنك كامل
تدوي البراعم والغصون سراعاً
فربيع ذي الدنيا قصير وزائل

Those in favor of semantic translation, on the other hand, would argue that the TL reader "should get a vivid impression from the content of the sonnet of the beauty of summer in England, and reading the poem should exercise his imagination as well as introduce him to English culture" (Newmark 1982: 50). With this in mind, a

semantic translator would thus find it appropriate to retain the ST image in the TL version (FaTiina Al-Na'ib, quoted in Xaluusi 1982: 35):

من ذا يقارن حسنك المغربي بصيف قد تجلى
وفنون سحرك قد بدت في ناظري أسمي وأغلى؟
تجني الرياح العاتيات على البراعم وهي جدلى
والصيف مسرعا إذ عقده المحدود ولى

In a third translation version of the above-quoted Shakespearian sonnet, the translator (Jabra 1986b: 715) goes even so far as to sacrifice the ST formal features of rhyme and rhythm for the sake of producing a semantically equivalent TT. He does so despite the relative importance of those features to the overall structure of the sonnet as a piece of poetic composition:

أبيوم من أيام الصيف أشدهك؟
لأكثر جمالا أنت عندي وأشد اعتدالا.
فالرياح العتية تجني على براعم أيار الحبيبة
وعقد الصيف ما أقصر أجله!

In sum, metaphorical expressions, compared to other types of expressions stand quite distinctly as enjoying artistic merits of which other genres are bereft. They are greatly culture-bound; the thing which makes their rendering tough. Metaphorical expressions simply refer to any constructions evoking visual, sounds, touch, etc..

However, it is sometimes easy to reproduce the same image in the TL if the image has comparable frequency and currency in the appropriate register. This procedure is usually used for one-word metaphor:

‘Ray of hope’ can be simply translated into (بارقة أمل).

Or the procedure is replacing images in the SL with a standard TL image within the constraints of TL cultures. The English metaphor 'my life hangs on a thread', with this procedure, can be translated into Arabic as (حياتي معلقة بخيط).

The following procedures for translating metaphors could be used (Newmark 1988b: 88–95):

1. Reproducing the same image in the TL.

2. Replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image.
3. Translating metaphors as similes.
4. Translating metaphors (or similes) as similes plus sense.
5. Conversion of metaphor into sense (explanation).
6. Deletion.
7. Translating the same metaphor, but combined with sense.

Read the following SL and TL texts then find examples of adaptation strategies and comment on them.

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally *salao* [to be unlucky in fishing], which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty.

The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway

كان يا ما كان في قديم الزمان، كان هناك رجل اعتاد الصيد لوحده في مركب شراعي صغير في البحر. وقد مضى عليه أربعة وثمانون يوماً دون أن يصطاد ولو سمكة واحدة.

وقد صحبه فتى في الأيام الأربعين الأولى ولكن بعد ذلك طلب والدا الفتى منه أن يذهب في قارب آخر لأن الرجل حظه قليل. أطاع الفتى أمر والديه وذهب في قارب آخر واصطاد ثلاث سمكات في الأسبوع الأول. حزن الفتى لرؤية الرجل العجوز يعود خالي الوفاض كل يوم.

Identify the strategies used in translating the following poem.

When You Are Old and Grey

By William Butler Yeats

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;
How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,

But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

Arabic translation:

عندما تكبر ويشتعل رأسك شيئا
تترنح نعسا أمام النار
خذ هذا الكتاب
أفرا ببطء وتذكر كم رأت عيونك؟
كم أحبك من ناس وأحبوا صحبتك
كم أحبوا جمالك
وكم كان صادقا أم كاذبا ذلك الحب
ولكن هنالك شخص واحد أحب روح الحاج فيك
وأحب حزن وجهك المتغير.

3. Metonymy

Metonymy is the use of a linked term to stand in for an object or concept. It is used frequently in both literature and everyday speech. As with other literary devices, one of the main purposes of metonymy is to add flavor to writing. A famous example of metonymy is, from Edward Bulwer Lytton's play *Cardinal Richelieu*:

"*The pen is mightier than the sword*"

القلم أقوى من السيف.
حد القلم أمضى من حد السيف.

This sentence has two metonyms:

"*Pen*" stands for "the written word."

"*Sword*" stands for "military aggression."

Metonymy as a stylistic (literary) device serves as colourful way to take the ordinary and dress it up into something poetic or beautiful. Understanding the context of metonymy is important. Every time you hear the word "pen," it's not necessarily a stand-in for "the written word." Sometimes, a pen is just a pen. Look for context clues in the sentence to help you decide if the word is simply a word or if it is a representation. These examples include the metonymy, the possible object or

concepts for which it could fill in and example sentences to further enhance your appreciation and understanding of the term.

Metonymy is used to provide meaning and connections to concepts. Writers often use it in this way, as well as to be more poetic or simply to make a long sentence more concise.

In William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar play, “ears” represent the ability to listen. Shakespeare is not asking for everyone to chop off their ears, but rather he's asking them to pay attention:

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your *ears*;”

أصدقائي أيها الرومان يا أبناء البلد أعيروني انتباهكم (اصغولي).

4. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a close relative of metonymy. In fact, some consider synecdoche to be a type of metonymy. While metonymy replaces a concept or object entirely with a related term, synecdoche takes an element of the object and uses it to refer to the whole. Synecdoche is a **figure of speech** in which, most often, a *part* of something is used to refer to its *whole*. For example, "The captain commands one hundred sails" is a synecdoche that uses "sails" to refer to ships—ships being the thing of which a sail is a part. When people refer to their car as their “wheels,” that’s a synecdoche. Wheels are a part of the car. Another term for a car is your “ride.” In this case, “ride” is a metonymy because it’s a related word that replaces the term entirely. A less common form of synecdoche occurs when a *whole* is used to refer to a *part*. An example of this is when the word "mortals" is used to mean humans—“mortals” technically includes all animals and plants (anything that dies), so using "mortals" to mean humans is a synecdoche that uses a category to stand in for one of its subsets.

Generations of writers have used synecdoche in both poetry and prose. It is a device used in many idioms, colloquial expressions, and slang terms. One common form of synecdoche uses a body part (hand, heart, head, eyes, etc.) to stand in for an entire person.

In Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, the character Baby Suggs employs synecdoche in a sermon:

Yonder they do not love *your flesh*. They despise it. They don't love *your eyes*; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the *skin on your back*.

In this context, "your flesh," "your eyes," and "the skin on your back," all stand in for "you." Baby Suggs is speaking of the hostility and violence that her community of freed slaves faces from white people. By describing her people as body parts rather than as whole people, Baby Suggs also emphasizes how the white people she describes dehumanize black people.

In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Act 4, Scene 3 Synecdoche is used when an angry Macbeth kicks out a servant by saying:

Take *thy face* hence.

خذ وجهك من هنا.

Here, "thy face" stands in for "you." Macbeth is simply telling the servant to leave, but his use of synecdoche makes the tone of his command harsher and insulting, showing the audience how angry he really is.

In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Samuel Coleridge uses synecdoche in the following lines:

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun.

Here, "wave" stands in for the whole ocean (or at least the part of the ocean—larger than a wave—that is relevant to the text). So, when the Ancient Mariner says "the western wave," he is referring to the ocean to the west, extending to the western horizon.



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